that will be taken account of, and then in the end, a way of coming to a unified decision. I think that is terribly important.

Now, let me just close with this thought. A lot of you clapped when I mentioned the 40th anniversary of the Little Rock Central High School. Those little children had a simple vision; they just wanted a decent education. And they literally were able to imagine that they ought to get one in spite of the fact that they were black—simple vision that required all of us to move mountains and requires things of us, still. But because they imagined it, it happened for millions of people who otherwise it would not have happened for—in all probability, including some people who are in this room today.

Now, what you have to do, all of you who are students at this college, you've got to imagine what you would like your country to look like 30 or 40 years from now. And there is a very good chance that if you have the right imagination, and then you live according to the vision you are trying to achieve, that you will get there. And things that may seem impossible today might wind up being much easier than you ever imagined just by the dint of continuous daily effort.

It all begins with having the economy work for people, making sure everybody's got a chance to get the kind of education you're getting, and never forgetting that we have to go forward as one America.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the auditorium. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Bob Lanier of Houston and his wife, Elyse; Mayor Johnny Isbell of Pasadena; Garry Mauro, Texas State land commissioner; Chancellor James F. Horton, Jr., San Jacinto College District; astronaut Ellen Ochoa; and Esmerelda Hernandez, San Jacinto Community College student who introduced the President. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Houston

September 26, 1997

Thank you very much. I told Tilman he should have just made the speech. [*Laughter*] He's about to get the hang of this. [*Laughter*] I'd like to thank Tilman and Paige for having me back. I thank Ken and John Eddie and all the others who made this night such a success. And I thank Alan Solomont for coming down here to be with us. Thank you, Governor Richards, for being here. And thank you, Garry Mauro and Bill White. And thank you, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee.

I had a good day in Texas, and I've had a kind of interesting 2 weeks. Someone asked me when I got here if I knew what State I was in, because I've been traveling around. We took Chelsea to college in California last week, and then I went back to New York for the opening of the United Nations. And then I went to Pittsburgh to speak to the AFL–CIO. And then I came to—I went home to Arkansas for a magnificent day yesterday. We celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Little Rock Central High School crisis.

And then before I came here, I went out to San Jacinto Community College, where I got to talk a little bit about the education provisions of the balanced budget act, some of the issues we are dealing with in Congress now, and a little about the whole issue of affirmative action, and I understand you've got a local initiative here you're dealing with on that.

And so I've had a very full and fascinating week. Tomorrow I'm going back home, and I'm going to the town where I graduated from high school, and we're trying to save our old high school. So I'm dealing with issues big and not so big. The older I get, the so-called little issues seem bigger to me. I want to save my high school, you know. I think it's important.

I was here with many of you exactly one year ago tomorrow. And I think we ought to make this an annual thing. I don't know—[*laughter*]—and maybe we could have another baby every year, too. And we could just celebrate a new birth. That ends my invitations coming here. [*Laughter*] I'm delighted to be back.

Let me make a couple of very brief points. First of all, I said something at the community college today I'd like to reiterate. These community colleges work the way I think America ought to work. You think about it.

We're living in a time of dramatic change in the way we work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world. The economy is new and emerging with all kinds of possibilities. And these community colleges all across our country are open to people of all ages looking for a way to better themselves.

First of all, they're open to everybody and you get treated the same, whether you're a man or woman, without regard to your age, without regard to your racial or ethnic background or your economic standing when you get in. Secondly, they're very much oriented toward change, not the status quo. Why? Because if they don't change, then they'll be educating people for jobs that don't exist anymore, and they'll go out of business.

Thirdly, they're oriented toward results, not rhetoric, something I wish we could have even more of in Washington. I work on it all the time. Why? Because if they don't educate you well, no matter how much they exhort, people won't be functional and they won't be hired and they'll go out of business. And third, they're oriented toward partnerships, not political division. Why? Because there's no Republican or Democratic way to run a machine tool operation or to understand how sophisticated manufacturing processes work, so people have to work together. As a result, they become the kind of dynamic community organizations that really are taking this country into a new century in good shape.

And I got to thinking about it because I love the community colleges, and as you know, one of the major parts of the budget that I was so proud of fulfilled my commitment to open the doors of college to every American for the first time and to make it possible for us to make the 13th and 14th years of education just as universal by the year 2000 as a high school diploma is today, because we give a $1,500 tax credit for the first 2 years of college which will cover the average cost of tuition and fees of 90 percent of the community colleges in the country. That's very important.

And we give further tax credits for the junior and senior year, for graduate study, for older people who come back for job training, an IRA that people can withdraw from tax-free if it's used for education, more work-study slots, the biggest increase in Pell grants in 20 years. This is a huge deal that is in the budget. And I think perhaps the most—30 years from now when people look back at this, I think two things will live out of this budget more than anything else. One is that we balanced the budget for the first time since President Johnson's last budget. And the second was that we opened the doors of college to all and gave the American people a chance to make 2 years of college as universal as a high school education is today and, therefore, that we made the country far more competitive. And I'm very proud of that.

But in general, that is the sort of thing I have been trying to do since I went to Washington 6 years ago. I can't believe it, it's been almost 6 years since I announced for President. I don't know where the time went. But a lot of you spent a lot of it with me, and I appreciate that. And I said then I had a simple but, I believe, profound vision of what I wanted our country to look like. When I leave this office and we start a new century I want every American who is willing to work for it to be able to get the American dream. I want our country still to be leading the world for peace and freedom and prosperity. And I want us to be one America across all these lines that divide us.

Now, to do that, we have to sort of be like the community colleges. I have said this many times over the last 6 years, but I'll say it again: We need to be oriented toward the future, not the past; toward unity, not division; toward change, not the status quo; and we need to lead, not follow. I believe that. And I hope you believe it. And that means a lot. We also need to be oriented toward people, not just existing power institutions.

Let me just give you some examples. What does that mean for the Democratic Party? Well, we gave the country the family and medical leave law. Everyplace I go, some ordinary person comes up and says, ''If it hadn't been for that law, my life would have been diminished considerably, because I got to take a little time off when my baby was sick, when my spouse was sick, when my father was dying,'' or whatever, ''and I didn't lose my job.''

We gave the country the economic plan of 1993, completely without any votes from the other side. And what that meant was, by the time we got ready to pass this balanced budget law, the deficit had already been reduced by 87 percent from the level it was when I took office.

We gave the country the crime bill over the bitter opposition of the Republican leadership in 1994. They said it was not going to do any good, putting 100,000 people on the street. What's happened? The crime rate has gone down in virtually every community in America. The Brady bill kept 250,000 people with criminal or mental health histories from getting handguns and ended a lot of illegal gun trafficking. And as far as I know, not a single Texas hunter lost her rifle. [*Laughter*]

When I went up to New Hampshire in '96—it was unusual for a Democrat to carry New Hampshire, and they voted for me in '92. Then they rebelled in '94. The NRA had them all in a lather. And I went up there and talked to a bunch of hunters and I said, "Do you remember what they told you in '94 about us coming after your guns?" I said, "I want every one of you that lost your gun to vote against me. But if you didn't, they lied to you, and you need to get even." [*Laughter*] It was an interesting experience, and we carried again.

Why am I saying this? It makes a difference. The parties have honestly different views. We ought to be free to bring our views to the table. In this last session where we had the balanced budget, the system worked as it should. Heavy majorities in both parties honestly wanted a balanced budget and realized that the record of the eighties could not be sustained and we had to go on and balance the budget to keep interest rates down and the economy rolling. But we had drastically different ideas about how to do it. Thank goodness we were able to get it done, because we argued and compromised in good faith and on principle, in a principled way.

What was the Democratic contribution to this balanced budget? I'll give you three: Number one, we made sure that we had a $500 per child tax credit and that it extended even to lower income working people like rookie police officers and beginning teachers and others who have children who needed the tax benefits, even if their income tax liability was very low. Number two, we got $24 billion in there to provide health insurance to 5 million—half of the children of this country that don't have health insurance—$24 billion over the next 5 years. Number three, we got the biggest increased investment for education since 1965, and all these tax credits and IRA's and Pell grants for college—it's the biggest increase in aid for ordinary Americans seeking college education since the GI bill 50 years ago. That's what our party contributed to that budget agreement. I am proud of that, and I think that is worth supporting, and I feel very good about it.

So I just say to you, this matters. And I associate myself with the remarks that Mr. Solomont made. I think that our friends in the Republican Party can stand a fair fight, and I'd like to see us have a fair fight, because I think we can in the end put people ahead of politics and have principled agreement, as long as we have both parties able to take their ideas to the people and to make their case to the American people and to put their positions forward. You are making that possible, and for that I'm grateful.

Now, as you look ahead, I'd just like to mention a couple of things. Let's look into the future, short-term and long-term. What it's going to take to make this country work over the long-term I think is continued success of the economic policy, dramatically improving the quality and reach of our educational efforts, figuring out a way to reconcile our obligation to preserve the environment and still grow the economy, and continuing to expand American trade. And this is one area where I think we have got to make a decision as Democrats where we're going to stand on the trade issue.

And I'd like to talk just briefly about each of those and one or two other things. One, let me just make this case. We're having this fast-track debate in Congress. Let me tell you, if you don't know what it is, fast track is simple. It sounds strange; it's basically normal trade authority for the President or his representative to make an agreement with another country about tearing down trade

barriers, which then the Congress gets to vote on, but they have to vote it up or down.

Why? Well, if you were making a business deal with somebody and you signed on the dotted line, would you sign on the dotted line—and then it was contingent on its approval by the board of directors—you might sign that deal. If they said, ''Everybody this person works for, every employee in the company can put an amendment on the deal'' that you just made if you wanted to, you probably wouldn't sign the deal. You wouldn't know what it was.

All fast track is, it's just a power that's been given to Presidents over the last 20 years, mostly from Democratic Congresses to Republican Presidents, to go meet with other countries, make an agreement and then be able to tell the other country, ''My word is good. I'll deliver if the Congress approves it or if the Congress does not disapprove it.'' That's all it is. But if you don't have it, the other countries don't think you're serious, and they're not all that interested in doing business.

Why is it important to America? Number one, as a practical matter, our markets are more open than most other countries, so nearly anybody we can make a trade agreement with we'd wind up ahead because when they dropped their barriers and we dropped ours, they'd be dropping more than we would.

In a larger sense, what is the economic issue? We have 4 percent of the people in the world. You can look around this house tonight and tell that most of us have been very fortunate, and we as a people have 22 percent of the world's wealth, with 4 percent of the world's people. The developing countries, principally in Asia and Latin America, but also increasingly in Africa, are going to grow at 3 times the rate of the wealthy countries, Europe, Japan, the United States and Canada. Now, you tell me, if they grow 3 times as fast as we're going to grow in the next 10 years, and we have 4 percent of the world's people and 22 percent of the income, I do not believe we can keep 22 percent of the income unless we sell more of what we produce to them. And no one has been able to describe to me how we can do that. It can't happen.

Furthermore, if we want to lead the world for peace and freedom and we want to have more countries that are success stories on their own and fewer countries like Bosnia where we have to intervene to stop people from killing each other, then we need to be in a position to have political influence and form political partnerships with countries that are democracies and committed to free market economics. And you can't do that, you can't lead, if you are bringing up the rear.

So this is a big issue in the Congress. I hope I will prevail. I do believe that when we trade with other countries in the right way, we help to lift their labor standards. I think that if we have to honor environmental standards, they should, too. But the bottom line is, we got 4 percent of the folks. If we want 22 percent of the income, we have to sell to the other 96 percent. It is not complicated. And I hope that you will all support that position.

The second big issue we've got to face is the campaign finance reform issue. And there are two issues to campaign finance, not one. One is how much money we raise and how it's raised. The second is, how much money you have to spend to get elected.

And I saw on one of the networks tonight—maybe it was CNN—a clip where I was asking the students at San Jacinto—I said, ''Most of you probably thought at some time or another that it was terrible thing that politicians spent so much time raising money and the elections were so expensive.'' I said, ''Let me ask you something: How many people have you voted for because you thought they had the best television ads? How many people have you voted for because you saw more of their ads? How many people have you voted against because you saw a negative campaign ad against them, and you didn't see them answer it on television so you thought you'd better not take a chance on that, and you voted for somebody else?'' And they all started laughing as we rocked along, you know.

The fundamental problem in campaigns is the cost of communications has exploded and, therefore, the demand for the funds to raise that and to keep communicating for political parties and for candidates has been severe.

So I hope that this debate we're having on the McCain-Feingold bill will produce a bill that will, in effect, alleviate some of the pressures that have been on some of you in this room, but will also keep you heavily involved in the process and get you to involve other people. I personally don't think it's a bad thing for a person who has done well in this country and believes in politics and wants to contribute something back to be able to do that. I think it's a good thing you're here tonight, not a bad thing, and I'm proud of you for doing it.

But I do think we ought to have a system that the American people as a whole have confidence in. Now, we can pass the McCain-Feingold bill. I hope we do. But in addition to that, I ask you also to recognize we have to cut the cost of the campaign. And the only way to do that in our country is to give people the benefit of free or reduced television, radio, newspaper, other communications time in return for cutting the cost of their campaign.

So when our friends in the media say that we ought to do something to clean up our house, I say, "You're going to have to help us. You can't say, 'Give me your money on the one hand, and stop raising it on the other.'" We have to do both these things, and I think we can together.

The second thing I want to say is, we're in a huge debate in Washington over education standards. Nearly everybody says we've got the best higher education system in the world. Most people concede we can improve our public education, and we have to. We are the only advanced country that has no national education standards and, therefore, no way of measuring whether all kids are meeting them.

So I have suggested we start with a reading test for fourth graders and a math test for eighth graders that would be voluntary, that could not be used against the children but would tell you how every child, every class, every school, every school district is doing against national standards. It is very important that our children be able to read and do basic math if you want them all to go to college. And I believe this is a good beginning.

There are areas of—a curious set of opposition to this, but I think that lower income kids, kids from difficult backgrounds, I think they need high educational standards in their schools even more than the rest of us do, because they have very few opportunities to make up for it if they don't get it. And I am determined to see this fight through. But I hope you'll support me. It is not right for us not to have national academic standards of excellence.

So campaign finance, academic standards, fast track. The last point I want to make is, I want to encourage those of you in Houston who are involved in trying to find a way to bring your community together and not divide it by race. What I said in Little Rock yesterday is true: This country is a lot better than it was 40 years ago. It's better in terms of less discrimination. It's better in terms of more economic opportunity. In percentage terms, African-American family income rose faster than white American family income did in the last 4 years. We are building a middle class of minorities. That's the good news.

The bad news is that the disparities are still profound and access to credit and to being able to build businesses and to being able to be full participants in the American dream still show disparity in our country. And we have got to keep working to find fair ways not to give anything to anybody for which they are not qualified but to give everyone who is qualified a chance to fully participate in the American way of life and to give us a chance to work together across racial lines. I can't tell you how important I think that is.

Let me just ask you, before I sit down, you just think about this and think about this when you go home. Think about how much time I, as your President, have had to spend these last 5 years as your President working on your behalf dealing with countries where people could not get along because of their racial, religious, or ethnic differences.

In Bosnia, you have three groups of people who are ethnically, biologically indistinguishable, who are in different religious and ethnic groups by accident of history. Think about the Middle East. Think about my people, the Irish, where I'm hopeful we will have some

real progress this year, arguing over what happened 600 years ago in battles. Think about Rwanda, where most of us might not be able to tell without being there a while a Hutu from a Tutsi, where hundreds of thousands of people were killed. How much time I have to spend on your behalf trying to keep people from literally killing each other because of their differences.

And here we have our—the school district across the river from me, that I get up and look at every morning when I get up in the White House, Fairfax County School District, has kids from 182 nations, speaking over 100 languages in one school district. We have 5 school districts with people from over 100 countries in it. But 2 years from now we'll have 12. People still believe in this country. They're still looking to come here to redeem the promise of America.

And I think that if we can figure out how to take a charitable but honest and open attitude toward working with people—which I must say I have seen more in abundance in Texas on questions of immigration and other things across party lines than I have in a lot of other States—if we can figure out how to do that, there is no stopping this country.

We have a sound economic policy, everybody gets an education, and we all work together, then the 21st century will be the time of America's greatest days. And that vision I started with 6 years ago will be protected. And if we can keep working together and finding principled compromises in the Congress, if I can convince the Congress and the Senate to confirm my judges, for example—[*laughter*]—if we can do the things that we ought to do, I believe we're going to be fine. But don't forget that depends upon having two parties that can fight for what they believe in within honorable bounds. And there are differences, and I gave you some of them tonight. When you go home tonight, I hope you will think about it and be glad you came.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Tilman and Paige Fertitta; special hosts F. Kenneth Bailey and John Eddie Williams; Alan D. Solomont, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas; and Bill White, chair, Texas Democratic Party. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

September 27, 1997

Good morning. I want to talk this morning about a very real threat to our judicial system. For more than 220 years, our Nation has remained young and strong by meeting new challenges in ways that renew our oldest values. Throughout our history, our judiciary has given life and meaning to those values by upholding the laws and defending the rights they reflect, without regard for politics or political party.

That is the legacy of the judicial system our Founders established, a legacy we recalled this Thursday on the 40th anniversary of the court-ordered desegregation of Little Rock Central High School.

But in the past 18 months, this vital partnership has broken down as the Senate has refused to act on nomination after nomination. And in Federal courthouses across America, almost 100 judges' benches are empty. In 1996, the Senate confirmed just 17 judges. That's the lowest election-year total in over 40 years.

This year I've already sent 70 nominations to Congress, but so far they've acted on less than 20. The result is a vacancy crisis in our courts that Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist warned could undermine our courts' ability to fairly administer justice.

Meanwhile, our courts are clogged with a rising number of cases. An unprecedented number of civil cases are stalled, affecting the lives of tens of thousands of Americans, from the family seeking life insurance proceeds, to the senior citizen trying to collect Social Security benefits, to the small business protecting its right to compete. In our criminal courts, nearly 16,000 cases are caught in limbo while criminals on bail await punishment and victims await justice. Our sitting judges are overloaded and overworked, and our justice system is strained to the breaking point.

The Senate's failure to act on my nominations, or even to give many of my nominees a hearing, represents the worst of partisan politics. Under the pretense of preventing so-